Week 5: Genres of the New Testament

Lecture Details

- **Lecture** - Genres of the New Testament
- **Speaker** - Henry Imler
- **Series** MMMM, the Bible
- **Date:** 25-10-5
- **Week:** 5
- **Topic:** Literary Genres and Historical Development of the New Testament

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Outline

1. Overview of New Testament Literary Genres

1. **The Gospels** - Extended passion accounts with biographical setup
2. **The Book of Acts** - Adventure novel genre with travel, shipwreck, snake bite
3. **Occasional Letters** - Paul addressing specific community problems, not systematic theology
4. **The Book of Hebrews** - High theology general letter with sophisticated argumentation
5. **Apocalypse (Revelation)** - Negative Widsom literature for suffering communities

2. Paul as Mystic Theologian

1. **Mystical Conversion** - Damascus road experience
2. **"Caught Up into Third Heaven"** - Technical Jewish mystical language
3. **Jewish Mystical Context** - Dangerous divine ascent attempts; four rabbis story
4. **Paul's Role** - Converted Jewish mystic writing to early churches
5. **Authentic Pauline Letters** - Written very early, before gospels

3. Jesus as Apocalyptic Prophet

1. **Historical Comparison Method** - Examining Jesus "from the outside" in Jewish context
2. **Apocalyptic Message** - "This world is toast; we can't get it together"
3. **Beatitudes as Corrective** - Ethical teaching for upside-down kingdom
4. **Divine Intervention Prophecy** - "God's got to come back and fix it all"

4. Historical Limitations regarding Jesus' Life

1. **Multiple Accounts Exist** - But cannot verify "the way we would like to"
2. **"Things Are So Fuzzy"** - Cannot make definite historical claims
3. **Warning** - "Be wary of other people" making definite claims
4. **Contrast with Paul** - Letters easier to analyze than oral Jesus traditions

5. Timeline of Early Christianity

1. **Jesus' Life (c. 3 BCE - 30 CE)** - Ministry entirely in Judea region
2. **Paul's Ministry (33 CE onward)** - Traveling missionary throughout Eastern Mediterranean
3. **Temple Destruction (70 CE)** - Jewish rebellion crushed; watershed crisis for Jews and Christians
4. **Eyewitness Generation Dying** - Creates urgency to write down traditions
5. **The Gospels (70-90s CE)** - Earliest written accounts in our canon
6. **Later Christian Production (90s-150 CE)** - Deutero-Pauline letters, other texts

6. The Writing down of Christian Texts

1. **Literacy Context** - Only ~2% of Roman Empire could read/write
2. **Lower Class Suspicion** - Documents associated with "somebody with power taking your stuff"
3. **Oral Tradition Preferred** - Communities careful with material they "care about the most"
4. **Response to Critics** - 30-year gap "actually backwards" - shows appropriate cultural practice
5. **When Eyewitnesses Die** - Christians say "we need to write this down"

7. Deutero-pauline Letters and Authorship

1. **Letters Differ from Authentic Paul** - Language, literary features, theology
2. **High Literary Sophistication** - "Someone highly educated probably wrote it"
3. **Example: Peter** - Poor fisherman unlikely to write sophisticated Greek
4. **Ancient Authorship Conventions** - No MLA or Chicago Manual of Style
5. **Writing in Teacher's Name** - "Common way of thinking about authorship"
6. **Not Deception** - "It's just different than we do. It's just different."

8. The Synoptic Problem and Gospel Relationships

1. **Markan Priority** - Matthew and Luke contain ~90% of Mark, often word-for-word
2. **"Copy and Paste"** - "Like I took your paper and put it all in mine"
3. **Q Source Hypothesis** - 230 verses Matthew/Luke share outside Mark
4. **Unique Material** - M-source for Matthew, L-source for Luke
5. **John Diverges** - Completely different sources and purposes
6. **Visual Evidence** - See handout with color-coded parallel texts

9. Analyzing Editorial Changes Reveals Theological Priorities

1. **Intentional Changes** - When Matthew/Luke change Mark or Q, it's purposeful
2. **Beatitudes Example** - Q: "Congratulations, you poor"; Matthew adds "in spirit"
3. **Pattern Recognition** - Matthew spiritualizes material blessedness
4. **Temple Cleansing** - Mark places at end; John at beginning of ministry
5. **Key Question** - Not "pure history" but "understanding what each was trying to emphasize"
6. **Method** - "Looking at the differences... can show you what was important"

10. Early Christianity and Roman Imperial Context

1. **Social Spread** - Christianity "gets in with the elites" and "with the lower classes"
2. **Geographic Expansion** - Paul's travels throughout Eastern Mediterranean

3. **Roman Control** - "Violent extraction" of slaves, debt, resources
4. **Christianity Illegal** - "You're claiming the real king of everything, not Rome"
5. **Periodic Persecutions** - Revelation written during intense suffering

11. Constantine and Canon Formation

1. **Christianity Spreads Up** - "Worked its way up through the Roman power structures"
2. **Political Necessity** - Constantine needed unity "to keep his empire together"
3. **Episcopal Council** - Bishops "from all over" put "in a room"
4. **Constantine's Demand** - "I don't care what it is, but you all need to sort it out"
5. **Canon Criteria** - "Oldest, most important, spirit filled"
6. **Result** - "Their best guess... I hope they were right"

12. Egalitarianism and Patriarchal Retrenchment

1. **Galatians 3:28** - "No Jew nor Greek, no male nor female, no rich nor poor"
2. **Corinthian Structure** - "Very flat... no pastor"
3. **Anti-Hierarchical Safeguards** - "No one person could say that they're speaking for God"
4. **Later Letters** - Household codes appear in Deutero-Pauline texts
5. **Still More Egalitarian** - "Dramatically more egalitarian than the wider Roman world"
6. **Observable Constriction** - "When you compare this set and this set"

13. Later Christian Imaginative Literature

1. **Gospel of Thomas** - Sayings gospel, possibly 60-150 CE; Gnostic interpretation
2. **Gospel of Peter** - Docetic gospel; giant angels, talking cross
3. **Infancy Gospel of Thomas** - Jesus as kid: clay birds fly, raises dead friend
4. **Purpose** - Christians "wrestling with" questions canonical texts didn't answer
5. **"Bursts of Activity in Crisis"** - "When things fell apart, that's when they found new things"

Glossary

Term	Lecture Usage	Standard Usage
Adventure Novel	Ancient genre featuring travel, shipwreck, snake bite; Book of Acts fits this pattern	Greco-Roman genre with episodic journey and dangers; genre doesn't determine historicity
Apocalypse	"Revealing" literature for suffering communities; God shows "behind the scenes, this is what's going on"	Jewish/Christian genre with symbolic visions, cosmic battles, divine intervention during persecution
Deutero-Pauline Letters	Letters attributed to Paul but "do not seem to be written by" him based on language, style, theology	NT letters (Ephesians, Colossians, Pastorals) likely written by later followers in Paul's tradition
Docetism	Jesus "only seemed human"; "God spirit hung out with him and then left him on the cross"	Early heresy claiming Christ appeared human but was purely divine; denied real incarnation
Egalitarianism	Early Christian "flat" structure: "no Jew nor Greek, no male nor female, no rich nor poor"	Radical social equality in earliest Christian communities; no hierarchy, no single pastor
Gospel (Genre)	"Extended passion accounts" where "the rest is setting up" death and resurrection	Unique genre combining biography, theology, proclamation; focused on final week of Jesus' life

Term	Lecture Usage	Standard Usage
High Theology	Hebrews' "sophisticated argument about how to fit all these ideas together" (not occasional)	Systematic theological argumentation engaging philosophy and scriptural interpretation
Kai	Greek word for "and"; Mark uses constantly: "And then we did this. And then we did this."	Paratactic style (coordinating conjunction) creates Mark's breathless, episodic quality
Markan Priority	Matthew and Luke "copy and paste all of Mark" - "almost all verbatim"	Mark written first (c. 70 CE); Matthew/Luke independently used Mark as source
Occasional Letters	Paul writing to "people I know having this problem right now... knock it off" (not systematic)	Letters addressing specific situations in particular communities; must reconstruct context
Oral Tradition	Preferred in ancient world; written documents associated with "somebody with power taking your stuff"	Pre-gospel oral transmission; sophisticated mnemonic preservation of sacred material
Passion Narrative	Focus on Jesus' suffering, death, resurrection; gospels structure everything leading to this	Earliest connected Christian narrative; "passion narratives with extended introductions"
Pseudepigraphy	Writing in teacher's name; "common way of thinking about authorship" - not modern cheating	Ancient practice of honoring teacher by writing in their tradition; culturally appropriate
Q Source (Quelle)	230 verses Matthew/Luke share outside Mark; "same order... same wording"; German for "source"	Hypothetical sayings collection (c. 50-60 CE); never found but inferred from gospel parallels
Synoptic Problem	Matthew, Mark, Luke "absolutely cheated off the one" - explaining literary relationships	How to explain similarities/differences among synoptic gospels; solved by source criticism

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Key Methodological Points

On Historical Claims: "We just don't have good historical sources... I don't know how to make any definite claims. So be wary of other people doing that."

On 30-Year Gap: Critics say gospels written too late - "That's actually backwards." Oral tradition was preferred; writing when eyewitnesses die shows care: "This is the stuff they care about the most. So they're going to be really careful with it."

On Ancient Authorship: "If I copy something over or put someone else's name on my text, that's considered the largest cheating you can do. However, they don't have good ways of citing... It's not a bad convention for them. It's just different than we do. It's just different."

On Analyzing Changes: "What I think is more interesting is looking at the differences, because that can show you what was important to Mark, or to Matthew. Why did he want to emphasize that? That becomes a really interesting question... That's where the really interesting stuff's going on."

On Canon Formation: Constantine put bishops "in a room" and said "I don't care what it is, but you all need to sort it out." Result was "their best guess at what was the oldest, what was the most important, what was spirit filled... I hope they were right. You know what I mean? I can't verify it the way I would want to."

On Egalitarian Constriction: Comparing authentic Paul to Deutero-Pauline letters: "When you compare this set and this set, there does seem to be a constriction. And that just opens up a lot of questions to talk and think about and wrestle with. But we don't want to not notice it's there."

Visual Aids Referenced in Lecture

1. **General Timeline of the New Testament** (10 BCE - 120 CE)
    - Shows genres, composition dates, authentic vs. Deutero-Pauline letters
2. **Rough Sketch of the 4-Source Theory**
    - Mark → Matthew & Luke
    - Q (sayings) → Matthew & Luke
    - M-source → Matthew only
    - L-source → Luke only
    - John doing his own thing
3. **Temple Cleansing Comparison**
    - Mark 11:15-17: End of ministry
    - John 2:13-17: Beginning of ministry
    - Question: "What is most helpful?" - Not "pure history" but "understanding what each was trying to emphasize"
4. **Beatitudes Parallel Comparison**
    - Q (reconstructed): "Congratulations, you poor"
    - Matthew 5: "Blessed are poor in spirit"
    - Luke 6: "Congratulations, you poor!"
    - Shows Matthew spiritualizing Q's material focus
5. **Color-Coded Gospel Parallels**
    - Green: Markan material
    - Blue: Unique to Luke
    - Yellow: Unique to Matthew
    - Orange: Q material (sayings shared by Matt/Luke)

Next Lecture: "How do we talk about it being inspired, but it's got these problems?"

LCARS

- The GAI tools used were: *Whipser*, *Akio* and *Minstral*.
    - Lectures are recorded, transcribed locally with *Whisper* (*Aiko*) and then outlined and glossed locally by *Mistral* for archival after review and expansion by the professor.
    - More: LCARS-Full-GAI.

Jesus' Teaching, Healing, Preaching, Execution, and Resurrection

30s

Paul's letters widely circulated

60s

NOTE: We do not have the sources we would like to reconstruct this timeline.

70

Judean Rebellion, 2nd Temple destroyed

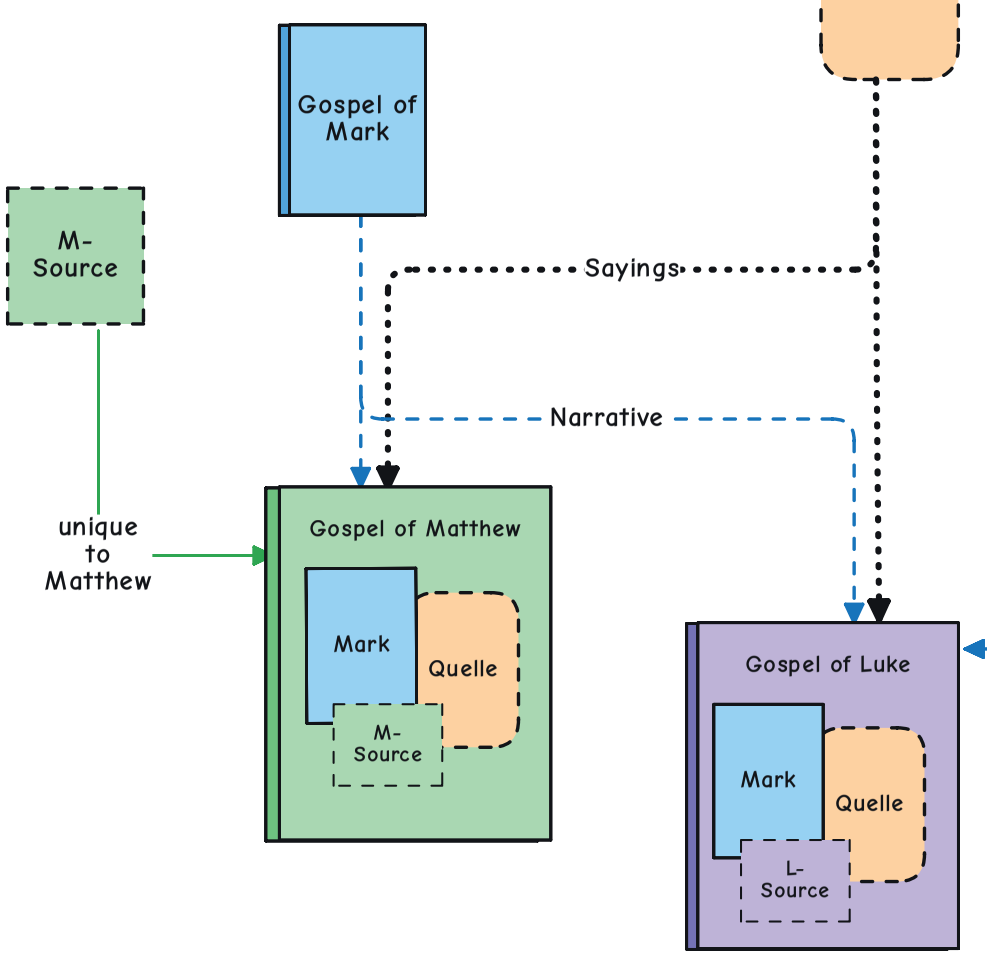
Christians expulsed from the Synagogues

90s

120s

Rough Sketch of the 4-Source Theory

1. Quelle - Collection of oral sayings
2. Mark - earliest account, used by Matthew and Luke
3. M-Source - Original to Matthew
4. L-Source - Original to Luke



Must make sense of

(1) Most of MARK is found almost verbatim in both Luke and Matthew.

(2) The SAYINGS OF JESUS in Matthew and Luke show up in the same order & w/ same wording.

HYPOTHESIS: Matthew and Mark used MARK and QUELLE (sayings text) to write their gospels.

Gospel of John

(doing his own thing)

End of Ministry.

282. Jesus disrupts the temple (Jn)

SEE #208, P. 158

Start of ministry.

Mt 21:12–13	Mk 11:15–17	Lk 19:45–46	Jn 2:13–17
			13It was almost time for the Jewish Passover festival, so Jesus went up to Jerusalem.
	15They come to Jerusalem. And he went into the temple		
12And Jesus went into God's temple		45Then he entered the temple area	14In the temple area he found people selling oxen and sheep and doves, and others exchanging currency. 15He made a whip out of rope and drove them all
and threw all the vendors and customers out of the temple area;	and began throwing the vendors and the customers out of the temple area,	and began throwing the v… o…	out of the temple area, sheep and oxen;
and he knocked over the currency exchange tables, along with the chairs of the dove merchants.	and he knocked over the currency exchange tables, along with the chairs of the dove merchants, 16and he wouldn't even let anyone carry a container through the temple area. 17Then he started teaching and saying to them, "Don't the scriptures say,		then he knocked over the exchange tables and scattered the coins. 16And to the dove merchants he said, "Get these birds out of here!
13Then he says to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be designated a house of prayer,'	'My house shall be designated a house of prayer for all peoples?'	written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer.'	
But you're turning it into 'a hideout for bandits'!"	But you have turned it into 'a hideout for bandits'!"	But you have turned it into 'a hideout for bandits'!"	How dare you use my Father's house as a public market." 17His disciples were reminded of the words of scripture: "Zeal for your house will eat me alive."

What is the most helpful question here?

- what is the "pure history" of the matter?

- understanding what each was trying to emphasize using the conventions of their time.

17. Congratulations (and Curses)

SEE #44, 354, PP. 35, 289

Mt 5:3–12	Mk	**Lk 6:20b–26**	**Th 54; 69:2;** 69:1; 68:1–2
			Th 54
[3]Congratulations to the poor in spirit! The empire of Heaven belongs to them.		[20]Congratulations, you poor! God's empire belongs to you.	Congratulations to the poor, for the empire of Heaven belongs to you.
[4]Congratulations to those who grieve! They will be consoled.		[21b]Congratulations, you who weep now! You will laugh.	
[5]Congratulations to the gentle! They will inherit the earth.			**Th 69:2**
[6]Congratulations to those who hunger and thirst for justice! They will have a feast.		[21a]Congratulations, you hungry! You will have a feast.	Congratulations to those who go hungry, so the stomach of the needy may be filled.
[7]Congratulations to the merciful! They will receive mercy.			
[8]Congratulations to those whose motives are pure! They will see God.			
[9]Congratulations to those who work for peace! They will be called God's children.			**Th 69:1**
[10]Congratulations to those who have suffered persecution for the sake of justice! The empire of Heaven belongs to them.			[1]Congratulations to those who've been persecuted in their hearts: they are the ones who have truly come to know the Father.
			Th 68:1–2
[11]Congratulations to you when they denounce you and persecute you and spread malicious gossip[a] about you because of me. [12]Rejoice and be glad! Your reward is great in heaven. Remember, that is how they persecuted the prophets who preceded you.		[22]Congratulations to you when people hate you, and when they ostracize you and spread malicious gossip about you and scorn your name as evil, because of the Human One! [23]Rejoice on that day and jump for joy! Because look: your reward is great in heaven. Bear in mind that their ancestors treated the prophets the same way. [24]Damn you rich! You already have your consolation. [25]Damn you who are well-fed now! You will know hunger. Damn you who laugh now! You will learn to weep and grieve.	[1]Congratulations to you when you are hated and persecuted; [2]and no place will be found, wherever you've been persecuted.
		[26]Damn you when everybody speaks well of you! Bear in mind that their ancestors treated the phony prophets the same way. 6:27–36 #45, p. 36	

[a] Mt 5:11 A few mss add "and tell lies" to the triad of *denounce and persecute and spread malicious gossip.*

36. Ask, Seek, Knock

SEE #318, 372, PP. 254, 303

Mt 7:7–11	Mk	Lk 11:9–13	Th 92:1; 2:1; 94:1–2
[7]Ask—it'll be given to you; seek—you'll find; knock—it'll be opened for you.*		[9]And I'm telling you, ask—it'll be given to you; seek—you'll find; knock—it'll be opened for you.*	**Th 92:1** Seek and you will find. **Th 2:1** Those who seek should not stop seeking until they find.†
[8]For everyone who asks receives; everyone who seeks finds; and for the one who knocks it is opened.		[10]For everyone who asks receives; everyone who seeks finds; and for the one who knocks it is opened.	**Th 94:1–2** [1]The one who seeks will find, [2]and for [one who knocks] it will be opened.
[9]Who among you would hand a son a stone when he's asking for bread? [10]Again, who would hand him a snake when he's asking for fish? Of course no one would! [11]So if you, worthless as you are, know how to give your children good gifts, isn't it much more likely that your Father in the heavens will give good things to those who ask him?		[11]Which of you fathers would hand his son a snake[a] instead of a fish when he's asking for fish? [12]Or a scorpion when he's asking for an egg? [13]So if you, worthless as you are, know how to give your children good gifts, isn't it much more likely that the heavenly Father will give holy spirit to those who ask him? 11:14–15 #69, p. 56	

*Jn 15:5–8; 16:23–24 (#209, 318, 321, pp. 159, 254, 256)

†GHeb 6b (#517, p. 392)

[a]Lk 11:11 Some mss insert "stone, if he asks for bread, or give him a" before *snake.*

With the *Gospel of John.*

70. God's Answering of Prayer

(cp. no. 187)

Matt. 7.7-11	Mark	Luke 11.9-13 *(no. 187, p. 172)*	John 16.24; 14.13-14; 15.7
7 "Ask, and it will be given		9 "And I tell you, Ask, and it will be given	16.24 *(no. 327, p. 295)*
3 you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds,		you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds,	24 "Hitherto you have asked nothing in my name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. 3
6 and to him who knocks it will be opened. 9 Or what man of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if		and to him who knocks it will be opened. 11 What father among you, if his son asks	14.13-14 *(no. 317, p. 290)* 13 "Whatever you ask in my name, 6
9 he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent?		for[1] a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; 12 or if he asks for an egg, will give	I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son; 14 if you ask anything in my name,
11 If you then, who		him a scorpion? 13 If you then, who	I will do it. 9
12 are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more		are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more	15.7 *(no. 320, p. 291)* 7 "If you abide in me, and my words abide in 12
will your Father who is in heaven give		will the heavenly Father give	you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done
15 good things to those who ask him!		the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"	for you. 15

504. Guards and Two Young Men (Pt)

SEE #264, P. 214

Mt 28:2–4	Mk 16:2, 4–5	Lk 24:2, 4	Jn 20:1	**Pt 9:1–4**
	[2]And very early on Sunday they got to the tomb just as the sun was coming up.		Early on Sunday, while it was still dark, Mary of Magdala comes to the tomb	[1]Early, at first light on the Sabbath, a crowd came from Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside to see the sealed tomb. [2]But during the night before the Lord's day dawned, while the soldiers were on guard, in pairs during each watch, a loud noise came from the sky, [3]and they saw the skies open up and two men come down from there in a burst of light and approach the tomb.
[2]And just then there was a strong earthquake. You see, a messenger of the Lord had come down from the sky, arrived ⟨at the tomb⟩, rolled away the stone, and was sitting on it. [3]The messenger gave off a dazzling light and wore clothes as white as snow. [4]Now those who kept watch were quaking with fear and looked like corpses themselves.				[4]The stone that had been pushed against the entrance began to roll by itself and moved away to one side;
	[4]Then they look up and discover that the stone has been rolled away. (You see, the stone was very large.)	[2]They found the stone rolled away from the tomb.	and sees that the stone has been moved away.	
				then the tomb opened up and both young men went inside.
	[5]And when they went into the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right, wearing a white robe, and they grew apprehensive.	[4]And it came to pass, while they were still uncertain about what to do, that two men in dazzling clothes suddenly appeared and stood beside them.		